



# Attachment Style Relates To Self-Rated Health

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## BACKGROUND

- Attachment style is a trait-like expectation concerning the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.
- Whereas attachment anxiety has been consistently shown to be related to health problems and intermediate biomarkers such as Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis activation and immune functioning, attachment avoidance has been less reliably associated with health problems.
- Self-rated health is an important indicator of physical health, predicting morbidity and mortality above and beyond traditional and non-traditional objective risk factors. We would expect attachment style to be associated with how individuals report about their health.
- Considering anxious attachment is associated with health issues, avoidance has been less reliably associated with health issues and most models have not controlled for both styles. The present study examined the differences between attachment anxiety and avoidance self-rated health.

## RESEARCH AIMS

- To understand the associations between attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and self-rated health

## CURRENT STUDY

- Participants (n=79) were healthy adults from the University of Utah and the greater Salt Lake City community. Participants' mean age = 27 years old (range 20- 45 years). The sample was 68% male and 91% white.
- Participants completed questionnaires on attachment style and self-rated health during a laboratory visit.

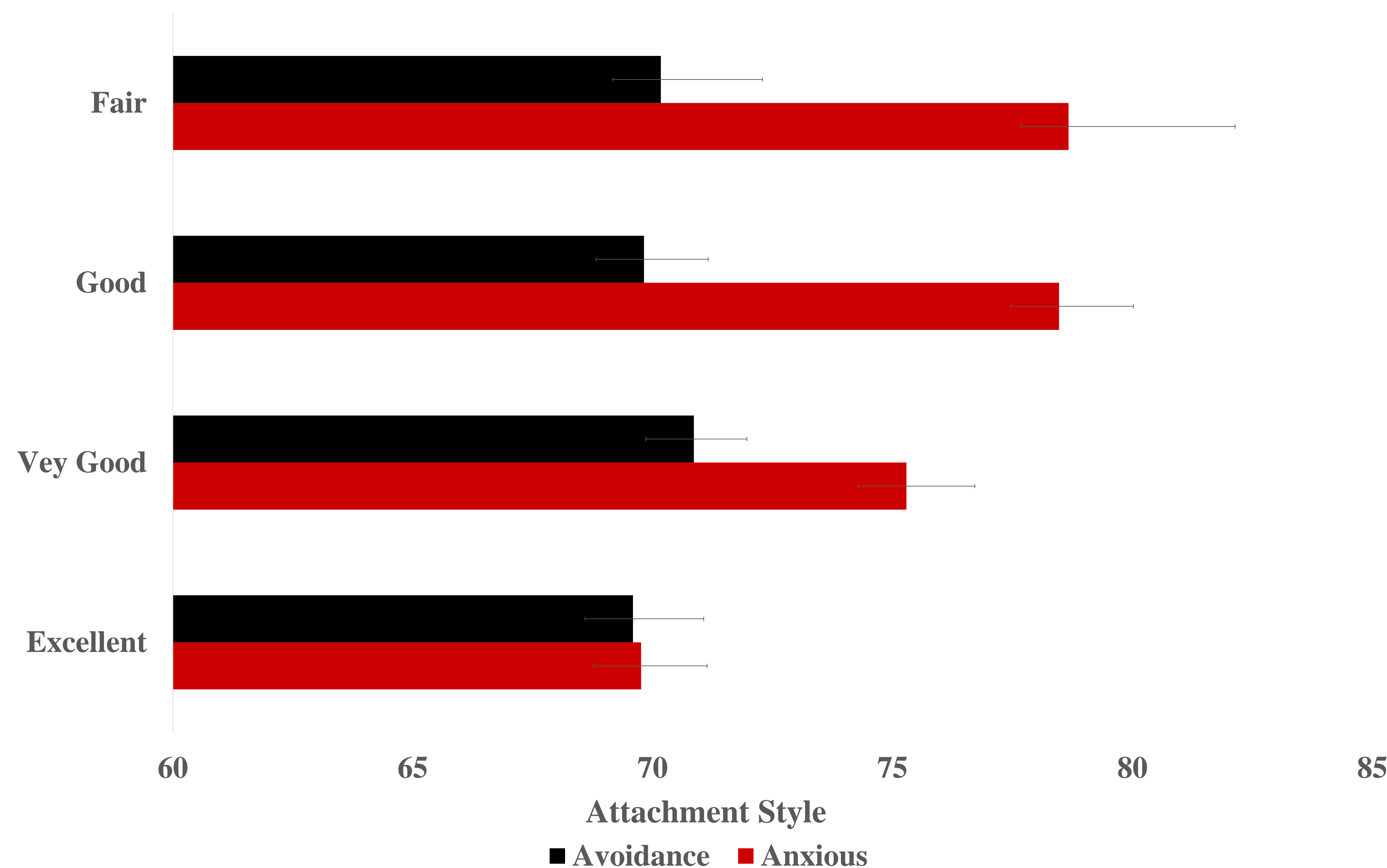
## MEASURES

- Attachment Style: Experience in Close Relationships Revised Scale<sup>1</sup>
- Self-Rated Health: Single item from the RAND 36-Item Health Survey questionnaire<sup>2</sup>
- Neuroticism: Taken from the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised<sup>3</sup>

## RESULTS

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Attachment Anxiety	0.055	0.013	4.07	<0.001	[0.03, 0.08]
Attachment Avoidance	0.036	0.018	2.02	0.047	[0.00, 0.07]
Neuroticism	-0.001	0.007	-0.1	0.917	[-0.01, 0.01]
Sex	0.308	0.202	1.52	0.133	[-0.09, 0.71]
Age	-0.001	0.016	-0.07	0.946	[-0.03, 0.03]

**Multiple Linear Regression Model.** Analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows Version 25.0. The full model of attachment style on self-rated health was statistically significant  $F(5, 75) = 3.53, p = .007, R^2 = 0.20$ . CI = confidence interval.



**Figure 1.** Mean anxious and avoidance scores for each level of Self-Rated Health with standard error bars. Anxious attachment, self-reported health group means are significantly different as determined by a one-way ANOVA,  $F(3,74) = 4.519, p = .006$ . Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed that participants anxious attachment was significantly greater for those who reported good health (mean = 78.47; SD = 6.39) compared to those who reported excellent health (mean = 69.77; SD = 5.67;  $p = .007$ ).

## DISCUSSION

- The results of the multiple linear regression model indicated that higher levels of attachment anxiety and avoidance are positively associated with poorer self-reported health issues.
- Overall, controlling for neuroticism, sex, and age, attachment anxiety and avoidance accounted for 19% of the variance associated with self-reported health.
- Expectations regarding interpersonal connection may be important in understanding the mechanisms underlying the perception of global health status.

### Contributions

These findings reveal that individuals with an anxious attachment style reported poorer self-rated health even after controlling for avoidant attachment and factors known to be associated with self-rated health.

### References:

- <sup>1</sup>Friley, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (2000). Adult Romantic Attachment: Theoretical Developments, Emerging Controversies, and Unanswered Questions. *Review of General Psychology, 4*(2), 132–154.
- <sup>2</sup>Ware, J.E., Jr., & Sherbourne, C.D. "The MOS 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36): I. Conceptual Framework and Item Selection,". *Medical Care, 30*:473-483, 1992.
- <sup>3</sup>Costa & McCrae, (1992) P.T. Costa Jr., R.R. McCrae Manual for the revised NEO personality inventory (NEO PI-R) and NEO five-factor inventory (NEO-FFI) Psychological Assessment Resources, Odessa, FL (1992)

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